

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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KARL BARTH ON THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE

The American quarterly *Foreign Affairs* for January, 1943, contained a long and penetrating article by Professor Karl Barth of the Protestant Churches in Europe with reference to their part in resistance to Hitlerism.

Dr. Barth begins by saying how, after the last war, the Protestant Churches of Europe were faced with fundamental questions. They were asking themselves the question "What is the basic principle and function of the Church in a human society which is obviously sick almost to death?" He shows how European Protestants felt compelled to restore to "its rightful position the element of objective truth which must ever be the secret of a living Church and which must be given recognition if the Church is to be differentiated from an inspirational conventicle and if its message is to have meaning for the life and living of human beings." Dr. Barth feels that it was this revival of concern for fundamentals that enabled the Churches to meet the crisis in 1933 and the following years "not wholly unprepared."

On the failure of Western civilization to deal with National-Socialism in its early stages, Barth says "Western civilization failed to confront National-Socialism firmly because the realization of the Christian revelation among the civilized people of the West (not only among the Germans) had become dim. Men did not see the inherent atheism of the Hitlerian system. Hence, they could not be sure whether

the antithesis between a legitimate state and a robber state, between democracy and absolute dictatorship, might not simply be a difference in taste, evaluation or political technique. Thinking in that way, how could people have been capable of a serene faith in Western culture and of firm resistance to that which threatened it? How could they think otherwise than they did, blind and deaf as they had become to the revelation of the Old and New Testaments?

"There was resistance to Hitler from the very first on the part of those who were on their way back to a conscious realization of the Christian presupposition of Western culture. In these circles it was not easy to mistake a human authority, however powerful, for that of God; a community of 'race, blood, and soil' for the Communion of Saints; the might of brutality for the power of truth. This group could not accept or treat the Jewish problem as a 'racial question.' The first serious protest against Hitlerism necessarily had to come, and did in fact come, from the ranks of the Protestant Churches that had been touched by the 'renewal.' They were the first to grasp the essential impossibility of the totalitarian state, the negation of life inherent in the Hitlerian doctrine of un-freedom, the impudent denial of the intellect by the National-Socialist cult of physical force. They saw through the intolerable implication of the neo-German anti-Semitism. Inevitably, it was in this quarter that alert and resolute wardens

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were found for Western culture, for freedom of conscience and speech, for the democratic state."

Barth then surveys the differing stories of Protestant Church resistance in Germany and the occupied countries. He concludes with some thoughts about the future contribution of the Protestant Churches in the life of Europe.

"The present crisis has evidently not yet reached its peak. The severest trials and tests of endurance for European Protestantism probably still lie ahead. And beyond the problems of wartime lie those of peace. 'The old world is dead!' a leading English statesman has just proclaimed. He is probably right. Europe undoubtedly has come to the end of an historic, political, economic and social era and confronts an unexampled re-beginning. Equally true is it that its renewal must consist not in the destruction of Western culture, but in its unhindered efflorescence, rooted as it is in Christianity. The new life which is to follow the death of the old must be founded on this culture.

"Will the confused and war-weary nations muster the courage, the insight and the will power to do this? Will they be able to comprehend that the world, for all its frailty and imperfection, after all the horror which it has known, still has a hope of better things? And will they comprehend further that without this hope no authentic quest for those better things will ever be attempted? It will be the function of the Christian Churches to proclaim this hope and to make it comprehensible. That is going to be much harder than the essentially critical task of to-day, when we are still at war.

"This hope is the great affirmation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but the Churches will be able to proclaim and expound it to all peoples only if they themselves regain true knowledge of it and learn to live by it, only when they themselves are ready to move forward with simple, direct, and complete faith in this Gospel."

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN CHINESE LEADERSHIP

Dr. H. P. Van Dusen, in his recent book "What is the Church Doing?" (S.C.M. Press, 5s.), draws attention to the influence of Christianity in China and in Chinese resistance to Japan. He writes, "The basic facts about the Christian Movement in China are now fairly well known. The

population of this largest nation on earth numbers close to 450,000,000. The Christian constituency in China, both Protestant and Catholic, cannot greatly exceed 4,000,000—roughly 1 per cent. Yet, if one runs his eye down the pages of *Who's Who in China*, where are listed the principal leaders of the country, he will be startled to discover that one in every six is a Christian. No less impressive in a land noted for its reverence for learning and for the formative influence of teaching upon the minds of men, is the fact that just half of those listed in *Who's Who* have received their educations in the Christian schools and colleges of China.

"If one turns directly to the personnel of China's leadership the meaning of these figures is far more striking; it can hardly elude the most casual observer. He discovers the impact of Christian influence in three concentric circles of widening radius.

"At the head of China's Government and at the very core of her national existence, as at once the responsible rulers and the trusted inspirers of her entire people, is a group of hardly more than two dozen men and women charged with the major tasks in this hour of supreme national emergency. A good half of them are Christians. Merely church members or nominal Christians, it may be asked, like many who head the Governments of so-called 'Christian nations'? A few of them, doubtless. But most of them earnest reverent men and women gripped and guided by a depth of personal religious experience and consecration almost unknown among persons in comparable positions in the West. Many of them find it necessary in the midst of their grave responsibilities to take at least a brief period each day for Bible reading, meditation and prayer, seeking Divine wisdom and help in their overwhelming tasks, and in the face of each major decision of national policy, putting to themselves the question: 'What does the Christian ethic direct here?'"

After showing how Christian leaders are in the vanguard of many movements for social amelioration, Van Dusen concludes, "Perhaps more than any other influence, Christianity is responsible for the extraordinary character of China's resistance, for its indomitable vigour. But even more, for the spirit of that resistance—a resistance which declines to yield to the temptation to hatred or passion for revenge, which refuses to retaliate the

wanton destruction of civilian life and property, which seeks only an international order of justice and peace, in which both Japan and China may take appropriate parts."

BRITISH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARIS MISSIONS

The British Committee for the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society has just issued its Report for the Year. It points out that the extensive missions of the French Society are now entirely cut off from their headquarters in France. This has placed heavy responsibility on the British Committee for these missions. Before the final occupation of France, the Report states, an emissary of the mission, the Rev. J. Keller, was able to leave France and to reach Dakar before French West Africa came over to the United Nations. The London Committee has had the following interesting letter from M. Keller, dated December 17th, 1942:

"It had been agreed that if West Africa, by joining the United Nations, became completely separated from France, I would become the delegate of the Society for the fields with which I could come into contact without too much difficulty. I shall therefore be able to write to my colleagues and give them news of their families, of the Society, of our Churches, and of their friends, news for which they must be longing. And also I hope to have the great joy of shortly being able to go to the Cameroons and to Gabon where I was a missionary for 15 years . . .

"I wish, however, to state at once that my presence here must not change anything in the task which has been entrusted to your Committee by the Society, and which has been carried on so faithfully. I am unable to leave Africa, and it is useful that the administration which takes care of the material life of the Mission fields which are in the sphere of your Committee, should remain in London in contact with our friends who help our work with such magnificent generosity, a generosity of which we know in France, and which has so often and so deeply moved us when we have heard the details of it.

"I hope it will be possible to remain in very close contact with you, to correspond with you about all the important questions concerning the life of our Mission fields which are henceforth completely separated from France and our Headquarters Committee."

The Report gives interesting information about the French Protestant missions in Basutoland and Barotseland, in French West Africa, Cameroons and Gabon. The following information is given about Madagascar:

"When Madagascar was occupied and joined the United Nations, an interview was arranged with General Legentilhomme, who was going to Madagascar as High Commissioner for the Free French National Committee. General Legentilhomme is fully acquainted with the work done by the Christian Missions in Madagascar, which he looks upon as of very high value both as regards the civilizing influence brought into the islands by the Missions, and also the deep influence of the Christian teaching upon the Malagasy. In particular he knows the full value of the work done by the Protestant Missions of all denominations, and he has entire confidence in them. It is the policy of the Free French Government to treat all Missions, of all denominations, whether National or Foreign, on a footing of equality and to give them all the same sympathy and freedom to carry on their work. This policy has been put into effect in Equatorial Africa with very good results, and it will also be carried out in the same way in Madagascar. It will be possible for foreign missionaries to enter and leave the country as before the war, and for their Societies to carry on their work in a normal manner.

"It is the policy of the Free French Government to give help for educational work and for the salaries of the European missionaries on the same scale (proportionately) as in Equatorial Africa."

CHRISTIAN COMMANDOS: METHODIST FORWARD MOVEMENT

A further sign of the vitality of British Churches in wartime is seen in a new approach to the people undertaken by the Methodist Church. Coining the phrase "Christian Commando Campaigns," the Methodist report that leading centers of population are invaded by a select team of speakers who will visit factories, military camps, canteens, public-houses, Borstal Institutions and other places not usually associated with religious services and meetings, and who will form Brains Trusts to answer questions, conduct special film services in churches, organize midnight meetings for night workers and take ad-

vantage of emergency opportunities and conditions to proclaim their message.

The Methodist Home Mission Committee hopes to convince the nation that a new world order can only be established on a permanent basis by a full acceptance of the implications of the Christian gospel and by the personal allegiance of men and women to Jesus Christ. "New Men for the New World" is the watchword of the campaign. A few weeks ago this new movement was launched by a special series of services and meetings in Blackpool, where much interest was shown by men and women who have hitherto had few religious contacts. At the Nottingham Commando Campaign (May 17 to May 26) a remarkable feature was the number of leading industrial concerns—some forty to fifty in all—in which these "shock troops of Methodism" were invited to speak to the employees. Here, again, good results were achieved and there are visible signs that in these two cities, at least Christian leaders are on the "tip-toe of expectation" regarding the possibility of an extensive religious awakening. The aim is entirely non-sectarian.

A NEW CRISIS IN NORWAY: A PROTEST AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The recent efforts of the Quislings and Germans in Norway to carry out a compulsory mobilization for work on German military fortifications and other similar construction has called forth another protest by the Temporary Church Leadership, under the chairmanship of Professor Hallesby. The Swedish radio on May 11th first published a report of this action. It stated that according to news from Oslo the Temporary Church Leadership, represented by Professor Hallesby and Pastor Hope, had sent an address to Quisling protesting against Norwegians being sent to work on German fortifications. They said that it is contrary to the Hague Convention and to International Law. The broadcast continued, "It is stressed in the address that it now appears clear that many Norwegians are being sent to work which in reality is a contribution to the German war effort under German command, in German uniforms, partly under German jurisdiction and German training. So long as a state of war exists between Germany and Norway, it is clear that those called up may be obliged to take part in military operations, or perform acts of

military benefit to the country with which Norway is at war. The Church cannot keep silence before this distress of conscience. It is the blameless duty of every subject of Norway, as of any other nation, to be faithful, and to act justly towards the land and nation in which God has placed him."

On May 15th the Swedish *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* referred to the recent arrest in Norway of the two Church leaders (Professor Hallesby and Pastor Hope), stated that both the Germans and the Quislings know that religion and the Church are the chief sources of strength for those who are unwilling to yield to force, injustice and barbarity. "They are therefore trying, but certainly in vain, to crush Norway's Church and to spread uneasiness and confusion in the ranks of the Christians. The spirit, however, has always shown itself stronger than brutality and force. Desperation is rising on both sides in Norway."

PRIMATE ON SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE HOUR

The Archbishop of Canterbury writes in the current *Canterbury Diocesan Gazette*:

"The season of Whitsuntide may well be used this year to strengthen our sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit in three ways specially relevant to this moment in history. With the great victories in Tunisia we begin to face a new and, we may hope, a final stage of the war. That stage may be long: it will certainly be exacting in its demands: but we may reasonably hope that we are entering on the phase of the war that will end in the victory of the United Nations. That victory will impose upon us great responsibilities and will confront us with great difficulties.

"If we are to surmount those difficulties and lay the foundations for a better international and social order we shall need wisdom and unselfishness beyond anything we possess ourselves, and for which we must depend altogether on the Holy Spirit. And if we are to approach those tasks in a fit state to deal with them, we must seek the help of the Holy Spirit to keep us free from the bitterness and vindictiveness so hard to avoid when fighting a barbarously cruel enemy. We need endurance without embitterment and we must seek to do justice without vindictiveness. It is a difficult balance to maintain."